United Nations S/PV.6911

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6911th meeting
Friday, 25 January 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Masood Khan	(Pakistan)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Estreme
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Tian Lin
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Kayinamura
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2012/977)

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13-21731 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2012/977)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2012/977, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Djinnit.

Mr. Djinnit: I have the honour to introduce the tenth report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), covering the period from 1 July to 31 December 2012 (S/2012/977).

Since my last briefing to the Security Council, on 11 July 2012 (see S/PV.6804), West Africa has continued to face significant challenges to governance, peace consolidation and conflict prevention, as illustrated by the ongoing crisis in the Sahel, especially in Mali, as well as in Guinea-Bissau, and the overall threat posed by transnational organized crime and terrorism.

In Mali, in conformity with resolutions 2056 (2012) and 2071 (2012), I have continued to work closely with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other stakeholders to support the implementation of the various pillars of the Strategic Concept adopted at the meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on Mali, held in Bamako on 19 October 2012.

Since the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in West Africa was issued, I have undertaken a series of consultations in the subregion aimed at fast-tracking the implementation of resolution 2085 (2012), especially the political process as the preparations for the military deployment were ongoing. I travelled to Bamako on 20 and 21 December 2012 to encourage the Malian authorities to strengthen the much-needed national cohesion to move forward with the transitional tasks, in particular with regard to the adoption of the road map to end the transition, including through the holding of elections, as well as to prepare for negotiations with armed groups willing to cut off ties to terrorist groups and to recognize the unity and territorial integrity of Mali. Following my visit to Bamako, I supported the efforts of the ECOWAS mediation with a view to preparing for a subsequent round of negotiations, initially scheduled for 21 January, in Ouagadougou.

However, the decision of Ansar Dine to renounce the cessation of hostilities that was agreed on 4 December, under the auspices of the ECOWAS mediation, and the advances southward by extremist elements precipitated the acceleration of the military track. Those advances prompted the Malian authorities to seek the assistance of France in order to stop the progression of the extremist groups. The subsequent decision of France to launch a military intervention in Mali to pave the way for the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) was widely supported by the international community.

All those developments have marked a turning point that has shifted the focus to the military track. As the hostilities continue, I call on all parties and forces to ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights norms.

Since the beginning of the hostilities, I have visited Ouagadougou and Abuja, on 13 and 14 January, respectively, to engage with the ECOWAS mediator and the President of the ECOWAS Commission. I also visited Bamako, on 17 January, to meet with President Dioncounda Traoré and other Malian interlocutors. Moreover, I also travelled to Abidjan, on 18 and 19 January, to participate in the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, as well as the Extraordinary Session of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government. The summit confirmed the readiness of the Heads of State of the subregion to deploy AFISMA, but also highlighted some of the key challenges ahead, including in terms of logistical support, as well as coordination and command and control, for which the support of the United Nations and partners was requested.

I wish to praise the commendable mobilization of the countries of West Africa in rapidly deploying troops

on the ground and in accelerating the operationalization of AFISMA. Following the recent ECOWAS summit, the Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority, President Alassane Ouattara, requested me to underscore to the United Nations in New York the importance that West African leaders attached to the immediate provision of logistical and financial support by the United Nations to facilitate the deployment of AFISMA. I hope that their request will be considered favourably and swiftly as the Security Council considers the letter submitted by the Secretary-General on 19 January.

I welcome the commitment that Council members have consistently expressed in their support for the military and political tracks to proceed hand in hand. As reiterated by the recent Extraordinary Session of ECOWAS, we must ensure that the political process is not neglected and that efforts to consolidate and strengthen the transition process continue. It is now essential that the Malian authorities finalize the road map to end the transition through an inclusive and consultative process before its adoption. I welcome the consultations led by Prime Minister Diango Cissoko to that effect. I encourage him to ensure that the consultations are as inclusive as possible so as to create a broad consensus on the way forward in fulfilling the objectives of the transition.

Likewise, it is important that the preparations for the holding of elections continue in earnest to ensure that the polls can be held as soon as feasible. In addition, it will also be necessary to eventually pursue a broad reconciliation process that strengthens the foundations for national cohesion in Mali. The recently deployed United Nations team in Bamako will be fully available to support that process, and I will personally continue to support those efforts.

Moreover, in line with resolution 2085 (2012) and further to the call made by the 19 January ECOWAS summit encouraging the ECOWAS mediators to persevere in their undertaking until the resolution of the institutional and security crises in Mali, in the coming weeks I will support mediation efforts that involve engaging with non-terrorist groups and other representatives of the northern population of Mali towards achieving a lasting solution to the issue in northern Mali.

I wish to stress that the situation in Mali exemplifies the fragility and vulnerability that prevail in the whole of the Sahel region, while at the same time the Malian crisis has far-reaching implications for the subregion. As developments unfold in Mali, the risks of infiltration and destabilization are real in some countries bordering Mali, as illustrated by the efforts of neighbouring countries to tighten security along their borders. The overall terrorism threat in the subregion has also been heightened by the situation in Mali. I encourage the efforts of Mali's neighbours and other West African countries to step up preventive security measures.

However, we must remain mindful of the limitations faced by the neighbouring countries of Mali and enhance the international community's support in the areas of border control and counter-terrorism, among other priorities. All of the above highlights the importance of the United Nations initiative on the Sahel, spearheaded by Special Envoy Romano Prodi and his team, whom my Office and the United Nations regional team back fully.

Beyond the crises in Mali and the Sahel, the region continues to be confronted with the threat posed by piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. That phenomenon has a significant potential to impact economic progress in both coastal and landlocked countries, as well as to disrupt international maritime trade routes that transit the area. Since my last briefing to the Council, UNOWA has facilitated, together with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the convening of two meetings of the Steering Committee on the implementation of resolution 2039 (2012), in Libreville and, more recently, in Abidjan.

I am pleased to report that it has been agreed to hold a ministerial conference of the States of the Gulf of Guinea in Benin, in March, to be followed by a summit of Heads of State in Yaoundé, hopefully in April, to launch the process of finalization of a strategic framework for the fight against piracy and maritime organized crime. In preparation for those meetings, the Steering Committee has endorsed a draft memorandum of understanding between the Economic Community of Central African States, ECOWAS and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea on safety and security in the maritime space of West and Central Africa, as well as a draft political declaration, expected to be adopted by the summit of Heads of State.

The tensions along the borders between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire and with other neighbouring countries remain a source of concern. I welcome the cooperation extended by Côte d'Ivoire's neighbouring countries and encourage them to continue their efforts to foster lasting peace in that country and in the region

as a whole. Building on the inter-mission cooperation between the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Liberia, UNOWA is promoting the development of a subregional strategy to address the threat of cross-border movements of armed groups and weapons, as well as trafficking, in line with resolutions 2000 (2011) and 2066 (2012). I am pleased to report that the President of the ECOWAS Commission has confirmed his agreement to our proposal for the holding of a meeting that brings together ECOWAS, the Mano River Union, UNOWA and other United Nations entities to better define the process towards the development of such a strategy. At the same time, UNOWA, the peace missions in West Africa and the rest of the United Nations system continue to assist the Governments of the Mano River Basin in preserving the hard-won achievements of the peace gains of recent years.

The Office is also engaged in efforts to strengthen security sector reform (SSR) in the subregion by supporting ECOWAS's development of a subregional SSR strategy and by providing direct assistance to the SSR process in Guinea. In addition to the anticipated United Nations engagement in Mali, UNOWA is exploring other entry points for the promotion of security sector reform in the subregion.

The situations in Guinea-Bissau and in Mali continue to illustrate the extent to which organized crime has developed its activities and extended its reach, thus threatening to seriously undermine governance and security in the subregion. At the same time, some positive steps to counter their impact have been taken during the past six months. In particular, the ECOWAS Commission, with the support of the United Nations and that of other bilateral partners, has begun to take encouraging steps towards the implementation of its Regional Plan of Action to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa.

In the light of those new dynamics, and building on our mobilization efforts described in the Secretary-General's report, together with our core partners in the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) — namely, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL — we are exploring the possibility of convening a donors conference to garner additional support for the ECOWAS Regional Plan of Action and for WACI. Furthermore, I am strongly encouraged by the increasing involvement of West African civil society organizations in confronting this threat. UNOWA is engaging different partners in the subregion to further raise awareness, including the Kofi Annan Foundation, which has taken initiatives in that respect.

With regard to electoral processes in the subregion, I wish to stress the need to remain vigilant to avoid elections-related violence. I also wish to commend the successful holding of general elections in Ghana and Sierra Leone, and to praise the supportive role played by ECOWAS in that regard. Their successful outcome, including the fact that challenges were addressed though the legally established channels, provides reason for hope. At the same time, concerns remain with regard to developments in other countries in West Africa where elections are to be held in 2013, including Mali, Guinea and Togo. It is essential that genuine dialogue among Governments, the opposition and civil society be pursued in a spirit of goodwill and cooperation to create conditions for the holding of peaceful and credible elections. On its part, UNOWA will continue its good-offices efforts to encourage dialogue whenever needed.

UNOWA strongly believes in partnerships in meeting its responsibilities. I am pleased to report that UNOWA's cooperation with its regional partners, in particular with ECOWAS and the Mano River Union, as well as with the African Union, remains very promising. That was illustrated by the review meeting I recently had with the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, and his colleagues in which we considered the situation in Mali, obviously, as well as cross-cutting issues, including drug trafficking and organized crime, piracy and maritime organized crime, the situation in the Mano River Union and the need to establish a strategy for that region, counter-terrorism and governance in the security sector.

Finally, I wish to remind the Security Council of the very important progress that has been achieved in the demarcation of the boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria through the efforts of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, which have been facilitated by the United Nations from the beginning. To date, 1,845 kilometres have been assessed and agreed, out of an estimated total of more than 2,000 kilometres. I wish to praise the commitment of the parties to that process, while encouraging them to resolve the status of the outstanding areas in order to conclude the field assessment of the boundary. I also encourage the

Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria to increase efforts to enhance cross-border confidence-building measures that address the security and well-being of the populations affected by the demarcation process. The United Nations is supporting the formulation of confidence-building measures with the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria, in order to give a human dimension to the political process of the demarcation.

Allow me to conclude my briefing by stressing that the situation in West Africa remains at a crossroads. On the one hand, the leaders of the region have made significant progress towards the promotion and consolidation of peace, and are making decisive efforts to address the pressing challenges to peace and security in the region. On the other hand, the situation in Mali and in the Sahel, combined with other cross-cutting threats in the region, including drug trafficking and piracy, has the potential to undermine security in West Africa, while the root causes of instability in the region are yet to be fully addressed. The continued attention and support of the international community, in particular the United Nations and the Security Council, to ECOWAS leaders and countries remains essential to achieve lasting peace, stability and development in the subregion.

The President: I thank Mr. Djinnit for his briefing.

I now invite the members of the Council to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.